

DATE ISSUED: October 9, 2003 REPORT NO. P-03-243

ATTENTION: Planning Commission, Agenda of October 16, 2003

SUBJECT: **PARK BOULEVARD PROMENADE - PROJECT NO. 2147.  
PROCESS 5**

REFERENCE: Planning Commission Report No. P-03-177(Report from the July 10, 2003 Workshop/Tour).

OWNER/  
APPLICANT: City of San Diego/Zoological Society of San Diego

### SUMMARY

This is an information only, follow up workshop only from the Planning Commission meeting of July 10, 2003. No action is required on the part of the Planning Commission.

### BACKGROUND

On July 10, 2003, the Planning Commission held a publicly noticed tour and workshop for the Balboa Park Promenade project to enable the public and Commissioners the opportunity to view the specific project areas. The tour of the project areas included a walking tour of the Zoo parking lot, the perimeter of Spanish Village, and the existing pedestrian bridge over Park Boulevard. The tour concluded with a bus tour of the Zoo's interior which included viewing older and more current Zoo exhibit areas, as well as a view of the proposed Richmond Street employee parking lot location. The tour was conducted in the morning and the Commission reconvened in the afternoon for formal presentation from the applicant, public testimony, Commissioner comment and discussion.

After public testimony, the Commission asked staff and the applicant for additional information and/or clarification in several areas. At that time, it was intended that the responses would be provided at a the future Planning Commission Recommendation Hearing. However, due to the scope of the information requested, the Commission subsequently asked staff to provide the

requested information at a second workshop, prior to the Planning Commission Recommendation Hearing. The purpose of this report is to respond to those issues raised.

### **Current Status:**

Environmental Impact Report - The Environmental Impact Report was finalised the week of October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2003. A copy of the EIR is being distributed along with this report to the Planning Commission, in preparation for the upcoming November 6, 2003, Planning Commission Recommendation Hearing.

Balboa Park Committee - On September 17, 2003, the Balboa Park Committee voted to recommend approval of the project with conditions. During that meeting, the Zoological Society agreed to all of the conditions. The list of conditions and staff's response to each item, is contained in Attachment 1).

Design Review Committee of the Park and Recreation Board - On October 8, 2003, a joint meeting of the Design Review Committee (DRC) and the Park and Recreation Board (P&RB) was held, which included a tour of the zoo project areas. The Design Review Committee recommended approval of the project with conditions. Staff is currently preparing the minutes from that meeting and the group's formal recommendation will be provided to the Commission at the 10/16/03 Planning Commission workshop.

### **Upcoming Meetings:**

Historical Resources Board - On October 23, 2003, the Historical Resources Board (HRB) will discuss the project and provide a recommendation. As of this writing, HRB staff are in the process of preparing the report to the Board and the report will be distributed to the Planning Commission under separate cover on October 10, 2003. Staff will provide an update as to the action taken by the HRB at the upcoming November 6, 2003 Planning Commission recommendation hearing.

Park and Recreation Board - The project has been scheduled for the Park and Recreation Board for October 30, 2003 for their recommendation. An update on their action will be provided at the November 6, 2003 Planning Commission recommendation hearing.

Planning Commission - On November 6, 2003, the project is scheduled for the Planning Commission.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The following is a list of those items identified by the Planning Commission during the

July 10, 2003 workshop, and staff/applicant response to each.

***ISSUE # 1: TREAT THE ZOO THE SAME AS OTHERS SUCH AS THE JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP GARDEN. IS THE PROCESS THE SAME?***

Several comments from the Commission addressed the need to ensure that the same guidelines and processes required of other Balboa Park institutions/lessees were applied fairly to all. This issue deals with whether or not projects require a master plan amendment. The proposed Balboa Park Promenade project does not require a master plan amendment for several reasons.

1. There are no existing requirements, either by City ordinance or other regulations, that require “master plans” be prepared for City-owned land. Master plans are prepared when desired, or necessary, to plan for and direct future development of an area or park. The most common master plans on City-owned land in the City of San Diego are park-wide master plans such as the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Mission Bay Park Master Plan. Master plans for development on City lands by separate leaseholders have varied in content and requirements based on the circumstances, terms and conditions for any proposed use of City land.
2. The Zoological Society of San Diego has operated and maintained the zoological gardens for the City since 1916. While the City owns the plants and animals, the Zoological Society is responsible for the care and maintenance of the zoological gardens as well as the parking lot in front of the Zoo, as stated in the existing lease. The existing Zoo lease also specifies the uses allowed within the zoological gardens and in effect functions as the “master plan.” The lease specifies that 99.43 acres are zoological gardens and 24.67 acres are a public parking lot. The zoological garden is where the care and maintenance of “all the animals, birds, reptiles, plants and their progeny and project as well as all exhibits and personal property belonging to City” occurs. Article V of the lease also specifies types of merchandise sales and rentals allowed. The additional exhibit area is limited to animal exhibits and 6.5 percent of the land area for the entire Zoo leasehold is allowed for restaurants and gift shops. One-third of the restaurants and gift shops would be located near the Zoo entry. This is the same percentage of commercial uses that exist today. Additionally, the proposed Park Boulevard Promenade project includes restrictions to reduce impacts outside of the leasehold area. The project requires height limits and setbacks for future Zoo development to eliminate any impacts outside the Zoo boundary. The goal of these limitations is to ensure the Zoo has no more impacts outside its boundaries than exist today.
3. The Zoological Society presented detailed reports and information on its space needs to the Working Group for the proposed Balboa Park Master and Precise Plan Amendments and the Zoological Society of San Diego Leasehold, which convened for 25 meetings between January 2000 and December 2000. Additionally, in 1984 the Zoo prepared a plan for the continued update of the old concrete/moat animal exhibits. In their place

would be new bioclimatic exhibits such a Gorilla Tropics and Tiger River. This plan helped the Zoo gauge its space needs for development of the bioclimatic exhibits and prompted the initiation of the plan amendment process that has resulted in the Park Boulevard Promenade project. This 1984 Zoo plan was also distributed to the Working Group at its May 11, 2000 meeting along with a Zoo report that specifically examined the space needs of the Zoo. The topic at that meeting was specifically focused on the land uses within the Zoo and the Zoo's space needs.

4. There are distinct differences between the Zoological Society leasehold and the lease agreements for SeaWorld and the Japanese Friendship Garden. In 1961, when SeaWorld was first proposed on vacant land in Mission Bay Park, the City required a detailed, phased "development plan" for the SeaWorld lease to ensure the timely development of the theme park. The City wanted exhibits and attractions constructed in a certain phasing schedule, at a specified cost, to ensure that a high quality tourist attraction was developed in a reasonable period of time. SeaWorld opened to the public in 1964. The SeaWorld master plan was last updated in 2001, the purpose of which was to delineate the areas for the increased height of future rides, attractions and shows in the theme park as a result of an increase in the height limit from 30 feet to 159.5 feet that had been approved in a prior referendum. Since the leasehold parcel was exempted from the 30-foot height limit, the City wanted to make sure the placement of higher development was closely monitored. Although four known short-term developments were precisely located, long-term development areas were identified in bubble diagrams with no specific projects. The question of whether or not the proposed SeaWorld expansion would exceed the 25% limitation on commercial development policy of the Mission Bay Master Plan was not the purpose of requiring a master plan. Unlike SeaWorld, which was proposing rides, attractions and shows, the Zoo is proposing only more exhibits, with a small amount of commercial use, similar to the uses that exist today.

In the case with the Japanese Friendship Gardens lease, the City Park and Recreation staff, with an outside consultant, prepared a master plan for development of the Japanese Garden in 1981. Three years later, the City entered into a lease agreement with a private, non-profit organization to implement the plan. It was stipulated that the Japanese Gardens must comply with strict historic and traditional requirements. The City ensured this compliance by preparing a precise plan, then requiring implementation of that plan in the lease.

5. The City of San Diego's Real Estate Assets Department, which administers the City's leases on City-owned property, generally requests a "development plan" that includes a description of the types of improvements and dollar amounts that the lessee is proposing to invest in the property. This information is used for the purpose of determining the terms of the lease. The Zoological Society is not pursuing any amendments to their existing leasehold at this time. Any necessary documentation will be requested at the time the Zoological Society makes the request to the City for an amendment to their lease.

6. Additionally, the Balboa Park Committee didn't see the need for a master plan as long as the uses within the Zoo's leasehold were focused on zoological gardens with minimal commercial uses. The Balboa Park Committee made the following recommendation:

The Zoological Society will stipulate that inside the Zoo, use of the additional exhibit area is limited to Zoological Gardens, animal exhibits and a small percentage of commercial use to maintain the existing balance of uses that exist today. The actual percentage of exhibit to commercial space will be included in any revisions to the lease agreement between the City and the Zoo and in any amendments to the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan and the Master Plan.

93.5% of all (existing and proposed expansion) of the zoological gardens would be used for animal and botanical exhibits and facilities support.

6.5% or less of all (existing and proposed expansion) would be used for restaurants and gift shops.

Percentage of uses and the location of restaurants and gift shops will be updated yearly to the Balboa Park Committee.

## ***ISSUE #2: LOOK AT THE PARKING NEED***

### **Parking Demand**

Projected visitor demand and parking space needs throughout the park were examined as part of the Working Group process in July and September of 2000. The Final Report of the "*Working Group for the Proposed Balboa Park Master and Precise Plan Amendments and the Zoological Society of San Diego Leasehold*" (December 14, 2000) pages C-110 through C-112 contain information provided by the Park and Recreation staff and pages C-168 and C-169 is the information provided by several of the cultural institutions. Additionally, the Naval Medical Center and City College provided the Working Group with a summary of their parking needs (pages C-140 and C-141.) Subsequently, in October 2001 the Zoo retained Economic Research Associates (ERA) to conduct a parking demand analysis. Specifically, ERA reviewed current and historical Zoo attendance patterns and updated resident and tourist market information (Attachment 2) Following is a summary of the conclusions:

General recreational park users (playground, picnickers, etc.) require 2,538 spaces based on the National Recreation and Park Association standard as presented to the working group.

- The Zoo based their parking demand on an ERA analysis of population/tourism growth projections in the market areas and the market penetration rates projected to 2020. The Zoo anticipates a 33% increase in Zoo visitors between 2000 and 2020 (3.5 million to 4.426 million). The Zoo employee and visitor demand will be 3900 spaces, assuming

20% of visitors come by means other than private car with 3.3 people per car which are aggressive assumptions.

- Other large park institutions estimate their parking demands, collectively, will be equal to the Zoo – meaning another 3900 spaces for them.
- Total demand for a typical busy day is estimated to be 10,338 in 2020. This serves the park 90% of the time, additional over-flow parking would be needed for the remaining 25 days a year that are busier. For the Zoo alone, this is up to an additional 1000 spaces.

2020 Overall Parking Demand (spaces) (based on a typical busy day - “design day”)*	
General Park Users	2,538
Cultural Institutions	3,900
Zoo	3,900
Total Demand	10,338
Total Supply (including proposed Park Promenade structure)	8,718
Short Fall	1,620

\* This serves the park 90% of the time, additional overflow parking would be needed for the remaining 25 days per year that are busier. For the Zoo alone the 1000 additional overflow spaces would be needed.

Structure Locations and Sizing Factors. The major factors in determining the location and size of the proposed parking structure were:

The popularity of the North Prado as a destination. The North Prado includes many popular cultural institutions: the Zoo, Spanish Village, Natural History Museum, Rose Garden, Fleet Science Center, Prado complex, and Junior Theater. The Zoo by itself currently attracts 3.5 million visitors which is 50% of all the visitors to cultural institutions in the entire Central Mesa. Due to the area’s popularity, the Zoo now uses off-site parking areas 100 days per year to accommodate Zoo visitor parking demand.

- Replacement of Eliminated Spaces. At a minimum, the eliminated spaces (3,293) need to be replaced, but this does not account for current parking deficits or future growth.
- The physical and cultural constraints on the site. The proposed Park Boulevard Promenade Parking Structure was designed to respect the existing historical area and the

existing leaseholds. For this reason the parking structure foot print is contoured around Spanish Village and the Natural History Museum. As such, a 4-level below-ground public parking structure can accommodate a maximum of 4,803 public parking spaces.

***ISSUE # 3: COMPARE WHAT PART OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT IS IN THE ZOO LEASE AND WHAT PART IS NOT. CLARIFY WHETHER THE PARKING STRUCTURE WOULD BE WITHIN THE ZOO LEASEHOLD.***

Please reference Attachment 3 for graphics which show proposed changes to the Zoo's lease. The majority of the proposed below grade parking structure would be located beneath the existing Zoo parking lot, however, a portion of it would lie partially underneath the proposed pedestrian "promenade" area. The Zoo application materials state that is their intent that the proposed parking structure not be a part of the Zoo leasehold. Issues related to leasehold boundaries, will be a part of future City Council lease negotiations.

The Balboa Park Committee recommended that the Zoo be responsible for the costs of operations and maintenance of the new parking structure as they are with the existing surface parking lot - but pursuant to a separate Operations and Maintenance (O&M) agreement. The O&M agreement should not be part of the new lease so as to imply that the parking structure is within the Zoo's lease boundaries.

***ISSUE # 4: DISCUSS ACCESS ISSUES FOR THE CAROUSEL***

The project proposes to relocate the Carousel from its current location to the northeast side of Spanish Village. Attachment 4 shows the proposed service access routes to the Carousel. There will be two service routes available to the Carousel: one accesses off of Village Place, along the walkway on the south side of Spanish Village traversing northward adjacent to the Photo Arts Building to the Carousel, and the other also accesses off Village Place, going around the west and north side of Spanish Village to the Promenade and access to the Carousel.

Emergency access for all vehicles can be obtained through the entire promenade. Truck service access to the promenade will be available at the north side of Zoo Place parking garage entrance, from along the west and north sides of Spanish Village and along the walkway on the south side of Spanish Village.

***ISSUE # 5 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE ALTERNATIVES***

The project has proposed a pedestrian bridge across Park Boulevard on axis with the Bea Evanson Fountain at the east end of the Prado. Several groups have expressed concerns to this proposed location. The Balboa Park Committee at its September 17, 2003 meeting, discussed the possibility of providing two pedestrian bridges. Their recommendation was that the bridge and transit center be located so as to not impact views to the east and minimize impacts to the Rose Garden and Desert Garden. The Zoo has provided five different alternatives for the location of

the bridge and has shown several two-bridge alternatives (Attachment 5).

Staff is in support of alternative 1b, which places the pedestrian bridge on axis with the front of the Junior Theater to the northeast of the Natural History Museum. The east side of the bridge is located on the west side of the Desert Garden. This alternative has less impact on the gardens located on the east side of Park Boulevard and moves the bridge off axis with the historic Prado. Staff can see no design or cost advantages to support a two-bridge alternative.

***ISSUE #6: PARK ENTRY STATEMENT***

The proposed design of the entry elements is a reduced scale version of the cupulas in the old Balboa Hospital gardens. These elements would also be landscaped. There is not proposal to put “Balboa Park Signs” on the structures.

***ISSUE # 7: VILLAGE PLACE CUL-DE-SAC***

There are five schematics on the Village Place drop-off issue contained in Attachment 6. The first is as shown in the Precise Plan, the second shows the existing configuration. One graphic depicts what is called for in the existing precise plan. Another shows a graphic as submitted for the amendment. An alternative with a turnaround just north of the Prado and a schematic with turnaround in front of the concession stand are also provided. Staff recommends the development of a design solution for Village Place that will accommodate drop off and pick up of passengers and supplies, while protecting the horticulturally significant, existing Fig tree and expanding the pedestrian environment.

***ISSUE # 8: ECONOMIC IMPACTS ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT***

The Zoo submitted a report entitled “Economic and Fiscal Impacts of the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Wild Animal Park on the San Diego Regional Economy” (Attachment 7). This report was prepared by CIC Research, Inc. for the San Diego County Taxpayers Association. City staff from the Treasurer’s Department, Financial Services, is currently reviewing the document.

***ISSUE # 9: COST EFFECTIVENESS OF TWO PARKING STRUCTURES VERSUS ONE.***

The Zoo submitted a letter from International Parking Design, Inc. dated September 2003 addressing this issue. The Building Official of the City of San Diego is reviewing their letter.

## ***ISSUE # 10: MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS***

The following is a list of items that required clarification/correction:

- A. Edge Treatment Graphics - Attachment 9. This graphic has been corrected to clearly show the toe of berm within the Zoo boundary line, where previously, it appeared to be outside of the lease line and, to correct the height of the fence to indicated it is a maximum height of 10'-0.
- B. Pedestrian Connections - Attachment 10. This graphic was modified to incorporate new pedestrian connections from the garage within major plaza areas from the promenade to Park Boulevard.
- C. Garage Section Attachment 11. This graphic was modified to more clearly show the relationship between the garage and the grade adjacent to it.
- D. Cost breakdown of garage structure versus other proposed improvements, provided by the Zoo:

Based upon the year 2003 dollars, capital/construction costs for the proposed project would total \$207,500,000: a) parking structure \$172,500,000; b) plaza/pubic space/amenities/landscaping/train/carousel, \$31,200,000; c) streets/curbs/utilities/ 3,800,000.

At the upcoming October 16, 2003 workshop, the Zoological Society will expand upon some of the items discussed above with a visual power point presentation to clarify the Village Place cul-del-sac alternatives the pedestrian bridge alternatives (pros and cons and origins of each alternative), the Local Historical Boundary (how it changes; should just the train depot be included or entire train leasehold) and leasehold boundaries. Additionally, the Society will provide a brief synopsis of transit issues/opportunities as they relate to the project. Staff will provide updated information as to all previous actions taken by the DRC, P&RB, HRB for the November meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marcela Escobar-Eck

Deputy Director, Project Management Division

## Development Services Department

SMT/RH

### Attachments:

1. Balboa Park Committee Recommendations
2. ERA (Economic Research Associates - Executive Summary)
3. Leasehold Graphics
4. Carousel Access Graphic
5. Pedestrian Bridge Alternative Graphics
6. Village Place cul-de-sac Alternative Graphics
7. "Economic Report" (Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis)
8. International Parking Design Letter dated September 29, 2003
9. Edge Treatment graphics
10. Pedestrian Connection graphic
11. Garage Section graphic
12. Please note that the following documents, some of which are referenced in this report, were previously distributed to the Planning Commission:
  - A. The Balboa Park Master Plan
  - B. The Central Mesa Precise Plan
  - C. The Working Group's Final Report
  - D. The Draft Plan Amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan
  - E. The Draft Plan Amendments to the Central Mesa Precise Plan

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